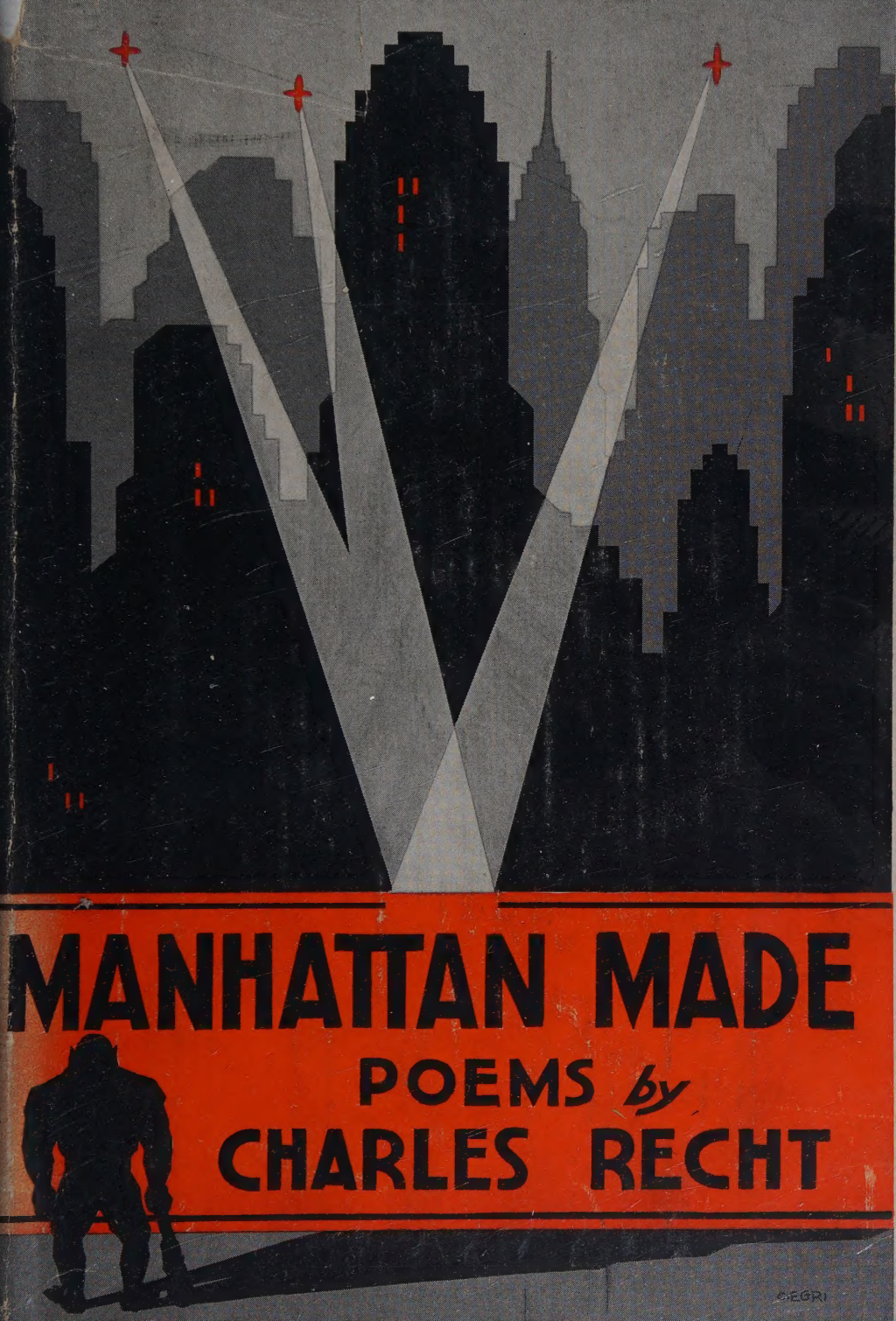
MANHATTAN MADE
POEMS by
CHARLES RECHT
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Manhattan Made

By CHARLES RECHT

Author of "Rue With A Difference"

From the warehouse of his colorful and varied experiences as lawyer, diplomat, novelist and critic, Charles Recht brings forth a highly original volume of poetry. Satirical and, at times, sardonic, these verses are an expression of modern thought translated into poetry.

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(continued on back flap)

Manhattan Made

MANHATTAN MADE

POEMS

BY

Charles Recht

New York

HORACE LIVERIGHT

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TO
MY MOTHER

NOTE

MAN ON THE FERRY
appeared in the December 1929 issue of
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FIRE FANFARE has appeared in "Transition";
MARAUDING IN MAY in the "New Masses";
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▪▪▪

I

SYNCRETISM

AND

OTHER POEMS

Syncretism in Confused Keys

> *"Take an harp, go about the city, thou harlot that hast been forgotten; make sweet melody, sing many songs, that thou mayest be remembered."*
>
> ISAIAH—XXIII: 16

THE NAME I bear is Hachsanus, but it is no great matter,
I am he who from the unfinished portico of an
Assyrian temple
Watched the symphony of hues of a sunset flung on the
face of the desert —
And troubled deeply about the essences.
Again, I was he, who hid often with Jewish refugees
In the propylaea of pagan acropolis and whispered with them
The proscribed teachings of their prophet, Jesus,
While moonlight shivered on hunched, mean olive trees
And spiders crept on the inside of Ionic columns,

Spinning the gods of the Hellenes into fairyland.
With pack and cross, mace and battleax,
I scoured the near and the far east for keepsake booty;
Again it was I, named after Saint Mark and Matthew,
The time I set out lustily to deliver Jerusalem.
Later, from Nuremberg I went forth for the pope and Holy Church
To punish the the Bohemians, infidels, dissenters,
Where lost in a forest I completely surrendered
To necromancy, fays, goblins and black magic.
Where Morgan le Fey, she of flaxen hair, erstwhile of Arthur's court,
Witch and darling of the heretics, held me in soft bondage,
Until I heard the wagons of the pursuing Taborites.
She then changed, and was none other than the runaway milkwench
Of the vassalage of Wencel, puisne Duke of Rosenberg.
Her spearing I delivered, then escaping, I joined the Nuremberg crusaders —
And knew full well why the land Bohemia was lost through perfidy
And thus was the door opened to venal Luther.
Once more, hoarse, lousy, drunk when fortune favored me,

Among gabled houses and cobbled crooked squares,
I clamored revolt as faith through the mouth of a clumsy
musket,
With hodge-podge rabble all convulsed with nip and tear
spasm,
And made my dot of offerings at the altar of Saint
Guillotine,
Yes, even I.
For within me were the dark currents of primordial gory
rituals —
And tho you may know me by many another name,
The name is Hachsanus, which is "repository."

I

O child of motors! You who do not consider
How many myriads of puny beasts perished within eons
To grant you a single volatile combustion of
a cylinder of joy,
I preach the wisdom of the creed of flesh.
All the abstractions which have coursed with seven winds
Were conceived within the womb of matter.
If you would grasp the secret of the universe
Clutch your fist upon a gust of air,

Or place a lump in the palm of your hand.
Festoon no romance on your mental edifice
It's the shekel coinage of a lachrymose halfwit.
Stardust is clay burnished with distant air,
The mind's a mirror scratched by fire, frost and flood.
And you, the aggregate of carbons and other gases,
Go jangling words to silence dim odious fears.
Withering and dying, man walks with all his dead,
Stepping on the heaven he seeks above his head.
Distraught, because time had emptied the niche
He had built for worship within his laden mind,
The years broke his idols of madonna, queen and witch,
Leaving him only the tarnished womankind —
He dare not make a deity of the ephemeral moth,
Nor think the Pleiades shine with purer lights
Than spawns of amœbas within some marshy broth.
Killer, devourer, he calls others parasites,
Fraternizing with elements in scientific terms,
While his own carcass is a battlefield of germs.

II

Many pasts are broken, their shards lie scattered
On mausolea dungheaps, perhaps a pack of swine

Picks a careful path through débris that once mattered —
And deeds in ashes mingle with ash of panegyric line,
The moon goes through an attic silvering musty papers,
Little shoes and dollies fill the garbage can,
Thru signatures of Cæsars gray mice cut sly capers
And weeded brambles root in the pipes of Pan.
Countless raindrops patter, countless words on paper,
Decade after decade some fool on glory reckons,
Burning cheeks and mazdas as once he burned taper,
While centuries sink like the slender seconds.
Why the perennial fever thru which shine
deathless roses?
Is it that death is bitter — and Art a cheap narcosis?
What is this madness called romance in life,
The April malady of an unseasoned soul?
With fear for its sire and bubble for its dame,
Vaguely incorporate where horizons dwindle
It stands like a sower, casting melodies, onsets and fame.
Have you not caught it from the moon in flight
Thru a translucent scarf of pale tints on blue,
In disheveled hair fragrant with dew?
In a pine-scented kiss chorused by crickets
Of a somnolent evening while firefly-dusted

Peonies breathe languor?
Or in some tortuous face out of memory's thickets
That you, like Orpheus, anxiously hold?
Why, why shall this patina of words on dross be encrusted,
Since the thin veneer is of conjurer's gold?
By Holiest Horsepower! Have you not read
About oxides and nitrates — and that Romance is dead?
Well, let it be dead.
I myself have passed my thirties, I have seen
Sunsets follow sunsets, the World War and Rome,
Motors star-flung and dynamos submarine,
The disappearance of the Victorian home,
Read my bit of Gibbon, driven the early Ford.
Discussed the psychists at faked Cheshire Cheese,
Argued economics until I, myself, was bored
Then ran off, to taste rouge at spare-ladies' teas —
Mine was a bobtail leaven the even with the odd,
I took the alloy with each desire,
And then fed on crumbs — Now when I swear by God,—
It is truth — told by an irate liar —
Since I've made all gods and seen them crumble —
I snicker while I pray and sneer when I am humble.

Comes a late afternoon — soon toward your casement
A city evening drags and billows,
Its empty hours trail you, one by one
Like the jerking parade of a pieced skeleton —
Weighting you down with the gray of eternity —
And you taste the boring agony of soul's divinity.
Then you pull the curtain with close precision,
To ring up the curtain on the inner vision,
You scale yourself down to stature carnal, human,
With a mazda and some rum, you try to convoke
A procession of women.....

Soon the drab dusk comes apace — your cross-hall
neighbors drone
The prepared enjoyment on their gramophone,
And from the paralleling street
Comes the undertone of taxis, trucks and feet.
A febrile prism starts to hover on the lamp,
Rainbow-moisture, your halfshut eye is damp.
You reach for self-expression. The words are labored,
blurred,
Your conduct diagnosed, *ergo,* is irrational, absurd —

You plan a psychic survey, or perhaps to drink a good
deal more —
When, you startle, rise — you were certain that you
heard
A woman's footsteps tiptoe your waiting door. . . .

O son of man, you are the graveyard
Of a million former selves; a scavenger
Raking the surface to joint a reclaimed sketch.
Resign this ache of probing, sighing and waiting,
Consider how the single protozoan goes a-mating.

INTERMEZZO

Wednesdays, sharp at half-past-three,
Mrs. Park Ellaine Normal
Gave her usual dansant tea;
The affair was strictly formal,
But the house was open more or less
To a casual vouched-for caller,
When there arrived, to her great distress,
Hans Neanderthaler.
His tail was *not* the swallow-tail,
But he certainly could swallow!

All sugar squares in the silver pail,
The candles, wick and tallow.
He liked the Chopin and the Bach,
He chewed up cups and glasses,
Lipped the Cézanne Madonna,— ach
Mostly silk-legged, primped-up lasses.
The chap was most anxious to please
Despite all strain and tension,
Despite that his undecked frontispiece
Saluted in stiff attention.
The gentlemen were mortified,
The Maestro had epilepsy,
Some ladies were horrified,
Some swooned to catalepsy.
He hopped off through the open door
N'ermore the lady would invite him —
And Thursday's Social Column bore
This interesting item:

"Mrs. Park Ellaine Norma. gave her
usual charming tea-dansant yesterday.
Among the guests were Baron Hans von
Neanderthaler. . . ."

And I say to you, bearers of the offspring,
You who see an intense empire
In the morning mirror while you talcum
Your cartilage and skeleton:
There is capital in your oval patch!
The smile above your chiseled teeth
Is worth a library of philosophy,
The hollow of your ankle and the knob of your knee
Of greater worth than a conquered valley and hilltop,
The two hemispheres of your earthly breasts
Weightier than the substance of the rolling globe.
I, who echoed all pæans of Lent and Ramadan,
Know deeply that you are the song, the spring, and the proem —
You, indeed, are the essence, the pure spirit of the flesh,
The atom, electron and the molecular nightingale,
Leap and sing — that you may cultivate your garden.

III

And I, Hachsanus, have I not known despair:
Lamented with Jeremiah, choked in catacombs,
And the despair of the days and nights
When muscles grow flabby and mind like insect stunned

Reaches for sequence, thought or action,
And fingers despondency without reaction?

Sometimes you may see me at the Café de la Paix,
Or the Continental in Berlin playing chess,
Or in a Village tearoom with a lady poetess,—
When indecision leads my attention astray,

While the attic Sappho offers coppers for my guess,
Within my brain, the hectic kino-meter
Ticks out the film by the hectometer,—
I move a pawn, drink, or watch the girl's dress.

And they see me, my fellow beings do,
Ears and trousers and the finger with the ring,
They make pretense that they think that I think —
And what am I doing — and what next will I do?

So we make a game of catchphrase muttering —
What can I say? Shall I, can I, break the seal,
Let loose the riot of pictures reel on reel —
And will they find *me* — within that flattering?

No, I hold my frame of self, fast in the *I* duress,
Endure the anxious moments; as when in bed
The prying woman seeks for things I unsaid,
I stop her mouth with cold kiss and staged caress.

I deny my naked mind — then she dons her dress
Cursing me as lover, while I watch her slink away —
So you see me sometimes at the Café de la Paix,
Or the Continental losing a game of chess.

And sometimes you see me reading in a park
On Prohibition or the Kellogg Pact
And fold the papers. Not that the daily fact
In agitation makes my eye grow stark;

It's that I marvel — at the fadeout light effect
On the pictures, while the orchestra grows dark
And rigor mortis cuts current to the arc —
I rise, brush my seat — and tilt my hat correct.

INTERLOCUTION

And O, my friends of chicken livers, cousins of feeble stomach
Depart you for the movies, I am anything but comic.

I can't tittle-tattle the sugared and the lewd
And am no aphrodisiac when I strip to the nude,
I am stunted, wrinkled, leaf-brown, tottering and hoary,
And heavy is my wisdom and queer humor in my story;
When the one-time reptile surveys the stellar places
My weary eyes twinkle, I even make funny faces,
It makes me split with laughter to see him split the atom
Or isolate a coccus — but that's more than you can fathom.

But I have relatives among you, to those I am talking
With them I have walked in odd old places — and shall
keep on walking —
I'd desecrate your morals — and make you sad and
moody —
So go ye to burn Judas or watch your Punch and Judy.

. . . . .

HACHSANUS DICIT:

Ruin on ruin, the leavings of all ages,
Destruction was not destructive enough,
Our lives are leavened with heritages
Of alien eras. Our cults are stuff
Of timid guesswork and ancestral bluff.

We make pilgrimages where the toad
Memorializes royal dirt and slough.
And mankind conserves the wormed, ugly load —
Rubbish, rubbish lies piled on our road.

The words that half-express what we would utter
Are edged with echoes of dead lips. Lust
And passion whelped in bush, cave or gutter
Sire aspiration. In our blood, rust
Of stilled conflicts coagulates with crust
Free will to live. Myth-haunted, we steal
From totem, altar, image or bony dust,
Shrinking, lest we'd whoop, dance around, or kneel —
Chaos, chaos is the only truth we feel.

. . . . .

I have trod the sod of mundane halflit paths
And purchased indulgences for my carnal sins,
Have I tortured girls in Caracalla's baths?
Or bibbled freely in vaulted Gothic inns
Until the panes were sunshot as with milk?
And wenched? At times on straws, on the village green,
Under a leaky thatch, or on damask, or on silk?

At port-town brothels, or within my lord's demesne
With my lady whisperful and scented?
But have I not always fasted well — and repented?

Have I sacked temples in fire-stinking town,
Slit throats, ripped bellies, at county fairs cut purse?
Scuttled a ship, watching good Christians drown
And crossed myself as they gasped a curse?
Lent a willing arm to rawhide, bow and screws?
Stood unflinching at impalement, or at quarter
As at the question of Castilian Jews —
Loudly praising the apostle and martyr?
Always, my worthies, I sang to heavens and chanted
My Te Deums — and my errors recanted.
Oh, my liege lords, noble forebearers, my ancestors sublime
Now embalmed in heraldry or intestined in some rhyme!
A heavy, heavy load is yours, and since unrecorded time
It has rested weightily against that frame of mine
And if I err, or stumble bit, and my shoulders grew rounder,
My worthies, I carry on tradition of the bounder.

. . . . .

INTERMEZZO

Oh, how I weep, I grieve, I mourn
The ages soaked in faith, forlorn;
When every chimney held a witch
And brace of goblins, every ditch
A salamander, and dark deep woods
The Rübezahls and Robin Hoods,
And gentle Christ was looking on
At his high and mighty Prester John,
When on palfrey steed the lasses rode
And knights slew ogres at each crossroad,
And every midnight on kirkyard's grounds
The ghosts went their wonted rounds;
While on high the angel flocks
Did guard this wheezing music box,
So that each had in *ad infinitum*
A guardian *ad pacem et litem*
And through orisons, cross and hymn,
All debits were charged up to him.

Now, this earth is just a frail
Porous atom, just a veil
With space above and space beneath her

Thru which one may peer at ether.
All its former plenum, tantum
Is just so much energy quantum,
With electrons in fearful haste
Haunting that limitless waste,
And the shining astral chorus
Is just as frail and just as porous,
The sun is but a flaming spout
Surely, slowly burning out,
But now from its random station
Warming a paltry constellation,
And by chance the distanced heat
Gives mankind a chance to breathe.
There is no scheme or confirmation —
God is just a corporation.

ANDANTE CANTABILE

(*conversationally*)

You can observe me, let's say, in a concert room,
The while the strings are twining an auditory coil,
A Slav cantabile, as tho Hellas' sickly nymphs were
winding

Faded garlands about a hero's tomb, observe me, munching words,
Me, Hachsanus, in a hired seat, afraid of you and the girl usher.
The while sheepsguts are whining, I'm seen soliloquizing.
And yet, I'd have it noted, I emphasize,
I am no prince of Denmark, self-embroiled, complexed gusher,
Guts pin-pricked by contrition's tormentors,
Without the sense for the ludicrous....
No, but there exudes from that anæmic composition
Something which invokes my spectral audience —
A distanced, weeping, twilight clarion
Which echoes softly in the millionth part of sense,
Like a kaleidoscopic quaint juxtaposition
Of fractured colors....
Arguing, as I do, with my resurrected mentors:
Let's forget precedents, the fin and fur and ape,
The hanging gardens, and the Sabine rape,
The time I lied at love in a moonlit Spanish bower,
Let's forget.... For this is surely time and place unfit,
(I underscore the particular date and the hour)

This Time of Grand Indexing of such as relatum, proton, cell....
Says I to them — sitting in the pit....
Tho Spenser wrote of Faerie Queene, Dante made maps of Hell
And Milton has done a complete interview with God....
This, you mark, is an age of billion mysteries gone bankrupt....
The Luna cradles no Diana, the clouds have lost a lining.
All that is done and past, I affirm with a nod,
And all the time the andante comes whining....
Observe then, says I, we've analyzed, established, found
All verities and values, our Common Denominator is Zero
In Four or Five Dimensions,
We have proven wave-lengths of matter, light and sound,
Sub-ethereal curves and declensions —
Why then, does this melody assume such pretensions
Making *me* — making me maudlin, archaic and weak,
Me! — Who can heterodyne a viola or a squeak?

And being a bridge I harangue the conscience and morale
Of my million spermatozoa on the opposite shore wriggling:

This Augean stable still holds some gossamer,
Your forebears have pitched into time-space the golden dung,
They have unmasked the megalosauric Pegas,
The wormy golden bough does no longer grace
The pavilion of witchcraft. . . . I bequeath to you,
You who linger at the gate of the unborn,
Whose Common Denominator is Zero in Four Dimensions,
This strife and longing to achieve perfection:
Moil ye shall, dissect, dissolve and equate
To achieve sublimation with primary elements!
This stall and stable which in ancient days did house
A fiery steed which Pegasus was y-clept,
Shall crumble and vanish into the basic mists.
Its threshold, roof, phœnix and gossamer
Nevermore be withered memento of a pale memory,
Thus only, and only thus, can you achieve oneness
With the Common Denominator in Four Dimensions.

So will you observe me in the concert room, and if my face
Contorts with sneer or some inward — pain,

The andante still in lingering agony — you explain
To a nearby neighbor: — A crank surely, a psycho-
pathetic case.
The Doomsday Book is in diffractions being writ
But no farthing, groat, or a solitaire can escape
(So, my ladies, gentle ladies, make the most of it....)
And if, and when, the Grand Inventoring shall embrace,
Be it by impact, freezing, fire, or the enlarging of the
pores,
And remembering always that matter merely is trans-
muted,
Nothing can ever be lost since there is no thing to which
to be losing....
Oh, well, you understand a statement so commonplace
And obvious, that it can hardly be refuted,
For its refutation would only lead to confusing;
Tho there be many who with symbols for speed, time and
space,
Will be at plotting for opening new doors
With veiled intent for a ladder or a stair —
Despite that without, negation's rays reign and meteors
And that men likes gnats are held in the vice of light
While cell-life is shielded by a thin protective layer —

They'll bore a pinhole — and shrink from the dim, blurred sight
Of boundless vistas of waste, barren of life or air —
Boundless waste — without all life or air.
I address the company of my paleologic sires,
Or appeal, at times, to my spermatozoic heirs
For confirmation of the past and anent the new inventions
And the Common Denominator in Four or Five Dimensions. . . .

I learn this: that there are certain laws,
You can demonstrate them on a guinea pig —
E. g. my perfumed lady in her silken robe,
So well groomed against all filth and ills,
Had a grandma who had lice and tail and paws,
And she a grandma who had scales and gills,
And she a grandma who wallowed in a slime,
Whose proper grandma being a small microbe,
Had as grandma a weed in prehistoric time.
The weed's ancestor was a single living cell —
The pedigree then dies on lines botanical
Branching to the inorganic parallel,

And tracing it on tree dynamo-chemical
We reach the hydro-oxi-nitro citadel,
And proceeding from there, we, sooner or later,
Reach my perfumed lady's Common Denominator.

The andante keeps throbbing, laying its pallid wraith
On my cogitations.
Still man must have faith!
Yes, man had faith in beauty
Which links the living and the dead....

Across the panorama of all man's wastrel years
A tendril trails out of immemorial past
Like a thread unbroken. The recent dead
Are by it linked with the living. It leads
Sage and savage. All human faiths and creeds
Have in the mold of that gossamer been cast.
Man's whole mad record can from that age be read
When grovelling in dust, past brush and marshy reeds
His eyes grew kindled, as he starward bent his head....
(Now for folks who miss old mottos and pious screeds
This quintessence: to hang on their door or bed:)

The soul of sound is in the circling wave,
The soul of light in the flower of a prism,
The soul of ether in the thirst for life,
The soul of life in quest of faith —
The soul of faith — beauty — man's syncretism.

(Motto for a Bourgeois Household)

. . . . .

IV

A CATECHISM FOR MY SON

No, I cannot pray to sungod, nor with him who sings
To the pagan orb, which through the crimson of an evening
Swings the soft radiance; nor with fervent lips
Touch the inscribed gate: I cannot read my fate in shooting star,
Nor the eclipse, nor the prophet's beard, nor the avatar,
Nor spell it in gospel covenant, nor with obedience bend,
And supplicate because I cannot fear, as my late
Forefathers feared.
I'll not disparage creeds, the hymnal scroll,
The printed page, the beads, the sacrificial fire, but what has my soul -

To do with things of stone, the kirk, the spire, gilded cross
or rod,
The chalice and the cowl — ant-sized niches for a meas-
ured God?
There's divinity in my heart and brain, where faith and
peace
Raised me above the stolid plane of awestruck beast,
Until I can face, that time is not, nor space.
Afar from the spheres enshrined, from glebes of sacred
wood
Where unconfined the amaranthine shore is spread,
Where the ether ends, and each prism and spectrum blends,
Where radium-laden nebulæ simmering spin and roar
And dawn is one with twilight. Beyond the bribes of good
Or evil's threat — the threshold to my dome is set,
And there — crowned with its vast ancestral glooms —
Looms the Cathedral of Finite Sapience:
Its hymnals are the symphonies of thunder, of new worlds
a-molding
Old ones falling asunder, its candles meteors dimmed and
cold,
The mosaics are laid with woof of starlight's silver
And sunlight's gold, its roof with eternal shade;

And within its girth lies the altar of mystic breath
Of that which never knew of birth, nor will know death.

NOTE. *It is suggested that the poem September be read immediately after Syncretism.*

A Man on the Ferry

A MAN on the ferry
Marking that overhead is a light-obscured miscellany of
stars,
That backwards, over the Jersey swamps, a moon
Looks sheepishly out of an ambush of swaddling vapors,
While the prow of the ferry begins its lunging
Toward Manhattan, spitting in effort the bastard waters
Of sullied mountain streams and jetsam-chucked brine.
A man on the ferry, heaving, faces frontward,
Where, on the Manhattan skyline, thousands pyramided
White-yellow windowpanes are toyingly pasted,
Because behind them, an army of dull ugly women
With dusters, and brushes, with brooms and with clouts
Upset and disturb billions of microbes, peaceful baccillæ,
And invisible wafting, gamboling micrococci.
What does a man on the ferry, waiting, expectant,
For thirty minutes, do with that brain,

Which passed on, out of the bush, and above
Hanging in treelimbs, in the recent eons of centuries?
Comes across the foredeck a citified breeze, sea-scented, night-embroidered,
Then a pair of searchlights cut compass diagonals,
Hailing the night-mail hopping in from Washington:
Light is a flower, opening only in fieldbed of ether,
This ether, the playground of circular searchlight, is giver of life,
Engendering growth of a molecule or a coccus,
Aswim within its colorless substance.
Yes, a coccus invisible, vaguely dimensional,
The billionth in the billions, fattens and prospers,
And then perchance, sometime, by radia pregnant, will turn to prisma
Elusive, diaphanous, glow in a sunset from purple to orange,
Magenta to vermillion, and when the flower of light
Folds up its blossoms, it will revert again invisible
Silently wafting down the empire of ether.
What then is romance, in places of buckwheat and syrup,
Compared with the ventures of a young, restless coccus?
The ferry is nosing some old decomposed lemons,

And again a spray flies on the man's cheeks:
Comes now to his mind betwixt Jersey and Manhattan,
Out of the darkness: Leo, the Isaurian,
On a low bed of wool and of feather,
Tossed the feverish patriarch basileus,
His white beard trembles on the indigo coverlet,
And on the straw headrest, the forehead is sweating;
Immortal cocci hover about him,
While Leo, the Isaurian, shakes with the problem,
If images made with the hindpiece of a rabbit,
Perform miracles, wink, smile and bleed.
Once, when Leo was lusty, he knew a hoyden,
A fullbreasted wench from crags of Armenia,
And had he not seen in a Byzantine chapel,
Right by the Isthmus, in a small pebbled seaport
Her image suspended above the rafters?
He'll have no whores hanging as Marys,
As sainted martyrs within his churches —
Not he basileus, Leo the Isaurian.
What — with Italy full of popes' concubines,
And above the border, like clouds of locusts,
Cathay and India reeking with incense —
He will have jackasses trampling on ikons,

He'll burn pigments and exorcise brushes,
And restore purity to altars of Theodora —
Then sighed basileus, gulping down thousands
Unbaptized cocci and unchristened bacilli.
The man on the ferry facing Manhattan,
Thought that the Greek Chrystos, who was son of Jew Mary,
Had defended the harlot out of pious memory,
As his sainted own mother had likely contracted
Without the office of the scribes of Augustus,
Or the rabbi in talith — which made no difference
To the infidel molecules or dumb micrococci.
Just then the bulk of a water-smooth tugboat
Named: "Mary O'Connel" humped itself into the path of the ferry.
Yet, it meant end-all war to Leo the Isaurian,
To keep freeloving maidens from the gaze of the public.
Oh, go not to Hollywood, Leo the Isaurian,
Nor not to Broadway, nor the breath of these lands,
For not even Euclid could find in virtue dimensions,
Unlike the cocci, it breeds not in ether,
Nor prism, nor radium makes it pregnant with contagion,

You cannot prove it by metric or theorem.
No, Leo, the Isaurian, go not to Hollywood.
Three bells now resounded from the bridge of the ferry;
Tugboats were pushing a big craft down, sea-ward,
The propellers idled breaking with different tempo,
Dark green were the waters, spangled with light:
Dark green the waters about the Statue of Liberty — dirt-
green;
Green are the waters and the gardens of Valhalla.
There, within the nooks of purified brooks,
The boys who passed with A. mark in history
Lounge in nanking sweaterettes, testing brands of ciga-
rettes,
And with nonchalant grin, discuss women and gin.
For those who murder and burn, and earn and learn,
Get a block of marble or nude-girled urn;
And the gardens of Valhalla are landscaped and green....
That ship was an old tub, bound for the Carribees,
Named Esperanza headed for Cristobal,
Overinsured, undermanned, plugged up and tinkered with
Rats in the hold, and a rat on the captain's bridge,
Led down the narrows like a decrepit veteran,
Chartered by a Spaniard of the blood of the Aztecs,

Loaded with Ford cars, phonographs, cheesecloth,
Stockings, rouge, powder, wallpaper, bathtubs,
Which belched a grunt or two for the slowing down ferry.
The man on the ferry — thought on Duluth — Wisconsin
Then pulled out a paper and looked at the stock report:
And then he wondered how the letter "i"
Sprung from the newssheet upon his retina
By changes chemical, or radial stimuli —
Or by some undescribed deep involved formulæ.
And for that matter, thought — was it matter —
In incept intentional, in concept dimensional,
And in precept changeful when it grew emotional?
Or was there thought-current stored in the "i" letter?
Then, from these absurdities
He leapt to profoundities
And thought how the modern would rewrite Genesis:
"In the beginning was the Electron
Aswim upon the depth of a darkness,
And out of the bowels of the Infinite,
A naked current swept the surface of the deep,
And Ether was born. . . ."
"And then Id had knowledge of Ether and saw it was
good;

And there came to pass the mating of the energies
Which begot the Atom, which begot Molecule,
Which begot the Elements;
And sinful were these in the beholding of the Id,
And they were damned and imprisoned;
And thus was Matter *begat.*
And Id waxed wroth, and out of the womb of Matter
Issued the Micrococci,
And they were curséd and ill before the Id
And became eternal unto Infinity, Amen."

"Oh parent dear, lend your care-waxed ear,
I sing a toast convivial:
My grandma dead, and your granddad's dad,
Are only unlinearly lineal,
I raise my glasses to the ghost who passes,
Who begot us and who will croak us,
Who grows and struts, sir, in your nose and guts, sir,
The Universal Micrococcus."

Just at this stanza, the ship Esperanza was 'most near the Battery
And the man on the ferry:
When spring came to Avalon it arrayed festively
Sundry and all — for spring was a messenger of death,

And death must have beauty sometime, for sake of renewal,
For death is to spring what color is to song —
Thus juxtaposition of syllables makes a pattern,
And the kaleidoscope of rhapsody is nevermore barren....
And the stake-boards on the ferry-ship receded, groaning,
The landing chain clanked shrilly, the passengers came up shuffling,
And the man on the ferry dug down for the nickel,
To pay for a ride on the Twenty-third Street street car....

Marauding in May

CHILD OF Manhattan, somewhere young buttercups
Show varnish new and wet,
Somewhere in subsoils earthworms wriggle,
And sweeter than the jazzband's clarinet
Sings the rising lark.

Seeking for a single blade of grass
A butterfly moves looping through the block,
Thru a patch-up cloud the sunlight spills
On a showcase with an Easter frock;
And again it's dark.

The breath of thaw comes as through megaphones —
Pert violet and clover sprouts
Out of the keys of your typing-machine
Up on the switchboard squats and flouts
A funny old bird.

From the Cathedral St. Patrick grows hymnful
On a parade of silk-hatted Jews,
From cornices sex-avid microbes dangle.
Let's embark on an ambulant cruise
Among this herd.
The wall-calendar shouts in heavy letters MAY —
Gas-stations to paint; there are kisses on the way.

I

Sallie Pincusson, whose father was Reb Aaron ben Isaac
Cut and confirmed in the Synagogue of Vilna,
Sallie, the sophomore, bought a silk umbrella
Stitched by a geisha in a sweatshop in Japan.

Sallie, Reb's daughter, covered the frosted mazdas
Which gave her "stoodio" that mysterious look.
Took Beowulf, an apple and Chaucer,
Bit, and thought of the legs of ye Squire;
Thru the window fell riveting and thumping
From where Lefkowitz was building a palace for garments;
Sunset broke over a thousand washlines;
Over the radio came the afternoon ration
Of an Irishman yodeling *Maria Ave;*

Piping came also of late evening editions,
Epics and lyrics of love pacts and quarrels.
There was the murder by a dark corset salesman
Of a Methodist who weighed two hundred pounds.
Sallie Pincusson lit a cigarette,
She will learn soon, she will learn yet
That well of English undefiled:
That Chaucerian slang.

II

There's a credo for a soul in the subway:
Tragedy germinates in each silken blossom,
Love is an assignment for tabloid news writers,
The dance is rhythm for engine and rivet,
May sky of shade of blue Copenhagen
Is like a swell picture out of the movies.
Life is a spasm, wide-eyed and breathing,
Death a stark blackness preceding birth,
Plasm will wrinkle, wither and shrivel,
Rouge is a crayon, the earth is a carbon,
Hemispheres end when you gets promoted,
Shakespeare's the guy who wrote Julius Cæsar,

Vulcan a gas range, Jason a battery,
And in the evening we read the comics.

III

Child of Manhattan, there are a thousand gin parties tonight,
Let's go a-Maying . . .

Out of the purified factory smoke
A wreath shall I make you,
Stud it with electric buds;
Softly I'll take you
Thru the grim forest of skyscrapers tall —
To where looms the Temple of the First National Bank.
Silence, stone and lewd electric arks;
Million dead-eyed windows peer;
Weighted, the street-bellies bulge.
You can't commit fornication here —
The place isn't decent.
The scene is a setting for a policeman's yawn:
A siren rants a sullen air,
Brings memories of spice and Lent,
And lilacs blow out of your hair.

Is the brand recent?
You must always use one that comes from Paris.

IV

"*Es war im Mai,*" when McPherson and I,
He with freckles scheming at immortality,
Thinking red hair does not show in marble.
"*Im wunderschoenem Monat Mai*"
On Second Avenue, following the hips
Of a Hungarian Jewess, hurdling desires,
Reminisced of soft coal odor that makes one dream on travel,
Of the desecration from the rear of a Ford taxicab
Puffing outside the moon-lit Coliseum,
And thus we passed the shop of one Xenophon,
Xenophon, the florist, scion of the ancients,
Who slammed the windows full of sweet peas, roses, violets and such,
Xenophon of Crete, who played the ponies at Belmont Park.

(In Belmont Park the grass is green,
It's greener when you're seventeen,

It's dotted full of shining spots
Of susans and forget-me-nots,
And there land agents plot in plots
To cut it into city lots
With just a sign with which to mark
That grass once grew in Belmont Park.)

And McPherson spoke of superpower and stored energy
And tho the birds did sing, ting-a-ling-a-ling,
We to café, filled with gutterals, smoke and tea
Where, under the electric sign of title regal,
We heard one Isidore Levy
Argue the Talmud with old Mr. Segal.
While on the tablecloth McPherson's pencil cavorted in volts.
And I sang the prowess of McPherson,
McPherson physicist, man,
Who harnessed the wild electron,
And jammed it into a can,
And thus man had become its master
Till it yielded the non-solar heat
And Manhattan could dance much faster
Upon its million feet.

Ach, still greater disaster
Said Mr. Levy, who was metaphysical.

Hark, a milk-wagon, hark . . .
Child of Manhattan, how we have drifted!

Among these bodies whom motors lifted,
Lowered and shifted, jumbled and sifted,
Upsteps, downsteps, they drag and hurry . . .
While Sallie reads her Canterbury
And Xenophon bets at Belmont Park.

Soon, somewhere, in some lonely lake
The moon will be bathing her anæmic face —
And why shouldn't it?

Fire Fanfare

I

INVOCATION

SUN — —
Alias Apollo, Phoebus, Allah, Ra and Brahma,
Tho, Baal, Isis, Queen Mab, likewise Mumbo-Jumbo,
Godhead of rhubarb, minnows and the jonquil on the telegraph wire —
Of an ancient tribe of sunworshipers I am the discriminating son.
I am no barnyard chanticleer, nor a twisted sunflower.
Sun — —
Breeder of maggots, ripener of pomegranates,
Multifarious sorcerer, fountain of fables,
You, who made the Ethiopians, toasted the Hindoos
And bleached the Swedes,
Life giver and taker, maker of fire of fires,
I, the brandisher of the Mazda Lamp,

Shall not genuflect nor supplicate,
I am not a spider sprawled across the Roman letter "V"
On the Arch of Constantine in the Forum.
I am a creator of figures myself:
This is a cell, this an atom, and that a molecule,
And such are the learned laws that control all beings,
That Newton operates even in a cocktail glass —
Laboriously have I gathered all this lore
I call physics, chemistry and that astronomy,
And You I have named The Sun
Having thus made you in my own terms,
What are you else, except
A picture that appears against my window pane
When I make my breakfast,
And a fixture that throws ochre cubist medallions
On my floor
When the six o'clock whistle of the Biscuit Company
blows?

I

VARIABILE

Under the sun two things at least are true:
Nothing ever is the same — and nothing's new,

No two blades of grass are quite identical
Which is quite complex — and quite as comical.
The world's pictures are like putty paste
The maker's fingers mold them in feverish haste —
But why does he have to be so hysterical?

The wind flings a petal on the surface of a stream,
A pain-filled tune breaks gently like a sigh,
The sun for caprice dreams a human dream,
Paints on your eyes a snatch of the evening sky
And tints your snake-hair with the glow of saffron kiss,
Your comely body is like the tavern for lust
And you're the sun's choice flower of the dust.
But this —
Is just a variation on an antique theme.
Within Omar's garden or Adam's paradise
(His gate had on it the primal "Private Entrance" sign
And also gave rise to the first case of *clausum fregit*)
They stumbled on this philosopher's stone — a souvenir:
That we must forget the primary treason,
That we must hide fear in the scent of old roses,
That my febrile dust in pressing on your dust
Raves that your pale skin has the life of marble —

Which how less brittle is than the lashes of your eyes?
Because, my Elect of the Sun, it is decreed,
(It flatters men to think that the gods also codify)
Because your breasts are truly circular
That you should breed.
And your body, which shimmers like a naked scimitar,
Should bulge and sag like a wallowing sack
And like a smitten trunk you should break and bleed —
I would avert my head from this hurt and cheat —
Fold
About my head the drapery of your cloth of hair of gold
And let me dream freedom on the sanctuary of your warm
neck.

Like the world's pictures are my puny words,
(But they are things which are solely mine —
A figure of speech is not a paste of cells or dust!)

And for the greater glory of your godlike face
I'll make a verbal cosmos as wide as space
Complete and rounded as the pearl on your throat,
Within, the iridescent worlds as they float
Will reflect your gold and blue and pale

While I shall lisp in quaint rhetoric stale:

That on the dawnlike heavens of your eyes
I shall theatrically wander — and play with the lights
That therein I am the Sun
Likewise impassioned and indifferent — —
And just as hysterical?

III

LENTE

(Reconciling Evolution)

The weight of dumb sun-rays bore down into ice floes and
deadening mists
And a million years of that, and there was a morose silence,
And a million years of that, and then a reptile was bred.
Egypt, chiseling imperishably and dumping sand,
Pest-ridden, civilized was not then by a million years.
God's bookkeepers shall have their inning
Not with the ape — the beginning,
The very beginning,
Per contra, began with the snake.
This was Ptolemy's primeval sire who so dully did aspire
With a blink at the sun and the stars,

From the baking and caking ooze, pebble and mire,
To build bigger and better hard mud empire
For congressmen, satraps and czars
And also "Proletarians of the World Unite."
But the beginning, the very beginning,
Was a siesta of the snake in the mud.
Thus the solution to all evolution
Per contra, lies with the snake.

All the time in the West there were fiery, red smears
No one told love words nor sang on the lone lake waters,
But a wind circular now extinct, like herded buffeted
buffaloes
Hooted and scooted across wave-shoaled wastes and
marshes.
All of which impressed the local flora and fauna
With a feeling indefinable.

IV

PIZZICATO

A gaunt old man with spindle bent legs
Dragging his body bundled in rags
Dropped on a bench where a sunset shone
Shaded his eyes and uttered a groan.

The Angelus broke on the evening air
A gust played with the old man's spare white hair
While through lips shriveled and drooling
He mumbled the words — "The sun is cooling"
"The sun is cooling. . .
"The sun is cooling. . ."

"The sun which gave birth to a myriad plants,"
He clutched the pale sunlight with his blue-veined hands,
"Which woke sweet passion in my febrile frame
"And tremendous tremors, love, hate and shame
"Is losing his vigor on his sky.
"He is mantling his body, he sure will die.
"The Angelus itself in strokes quite clear
"Is saying it plain, so all can hear:
"The sun — is — cool — ing. . .
"The sun — is — cool — ing. . ."

"You planned it fine," he said with a sneer,
"With never a thought how the end was near,
"And bridges and churches and houses so high,
"And aeroplanes dancing on the vault of the sky,
"And heat that would ooze from a coil or a pipe
"Corn in tempests and fruits red cheeked and ripe

"And more yet was coming — not even the lice
"Will move a wee leg in the tons of ice.
"The sun — is — cooling. . .
"The sun — is — cooling. . . ."

And a light breeze blew and furried a lake,
Even the bowl of the sky seemed to shiver and shake.
A tiny ant darted with nervous stride
Under some mudcrumb from death to hide.
The man about his bones drew his threadbare coat
And wagged his head with every note
Mumbling the words: "All your fooling
"And planning will end.
"For the sun is cooling. . .
"The sun — is — cool — ing . . .
"The sun — is — cool — ing . . ."

V

MEMORABILE

One of my forbears was burned in the fire —
Kabala, Kabala, Kabala. . .
In the City of Prague, the home of the Golem —
Kabala, Kabala, Kabala. . .

He stood on the pyre
An old bearded Jew, blinking at the sun.
He thought a lot of things, or only
That the sun would go behind the houses and the river
Elbe
Would be flooded with red.
But it was not Kabala, Kabala, Kabala —
An unwashed old Jew must not covet
A stone he called "brilliant"
Which captured and held sunrays and fire
And had to be forfeited by law to the Crown.
So that at night in a castle it would sparkle
Against the fire of a blazoning hearth
On a blue-veined, pale, waxen, tapering finger
Firmly pressing with purple filled glass...
"Hear, O Israel," the pine faggots are crackling..
Kabala, Kabala, Kabala....

VI

GRANDIOSO

Cloud-veiled, her nose powdered with snow,
The mountain glowers into the mirror of the lake.
I squat before the woodfire my own hands have made

Confident, contented, of a long lineage of flame worshipers.
The meditative son
Everywhere abound the symbols of my fears and elations
I have peopled the woodlands and fleeted the waters with fancies,
Images have I made, laws, round words and melodies
Out of air, cell-life and waters . . .
Prometheus pinned like a butterfly against the rock
Is hunched and enigmatic.
"Ecce Homo" — a fearful, sliding Jesus —
All this have I fashioned of that and more, and more.
I, electron splitter, the fetcher of fire, the pitcher and catcher of sparks
Having smoldered this earth-cloud with which I curtain the sun,
I let my eyes dance with the leap and crackle
And trail the climbing of its child's hair smoke
Which puffs and edges like the compass of human aspirations
Along the corridors of the Imbecile Void. . . .

II

PATTERN FOR A RUSSIAN TOWEL

Pattern for a Russian Towel

TWILIGHT: a belated sleep-weary sparrow
Cocks its head on the edge of the fire-escape.
Into its blackpebble eyes slantwise there whirl
Pell-mell bits of Manhattan, the park, the traffic
Converging angular lines of the strange city
Of aliens before aliens, the metropolis of grief inarticulate,
Wherein to dream because it is bereft of dreams.
Past hills and oceans, far beyond the hindmost precincts of the park below
Your eyes have wandered, and in the heart of them rose miniature fragments.
You sighed, and in the ensuing silence I prayed for power to gather
The wavering threads which against Manhattan's dusk
Circle in the memory of our crystal minds a pale, waning iridescence.

Thru the framing blackpainted bars of the tenement's
fire-escape
Above the last visible line of trees of the city park
Moves a panorama of torn clouded pictures
Of your country, and mine, you permitting, devochka
dorogaia . . .
Countless huts with countless downcast faces,
Pallid, wide-eyed, silent women's seeking faces:
Skeins that the winds have tangled
Hopes that the fates have mangled
Dreams for a day's darkening
Patterns for a season
A twelvemonth of grief.
In the sanctuary of your cleanswept izba there are ikons
Studded with rubies, amethysts and sapphires of child-
hood's reveries,
To these your image-seeking eyes wander in prayer,
Let me, country-fashion, festoon upon that wall a towel
Homespun, crammed with babe designs, bizarre and flam-
boyant:
Cocks and bears, and huddled babas, dogs and wood-
chucks,

Crows and sleighs, bearded woodcutters and an accordioned
gypsy,
Let me for you, who are my Russia, embroider, stitch,
Pull out a design out of the uneven, coarse fabric of our
days:
Drop stitch, cross stitch, chain stitch —
Think a little, dream a little, sigh a little —
And in this place some peasant lace —
And then you wipe a tear. . . .

I

Within the murky blue stained tower
Of the sprouting-onion Chram of Vassily the Blessed,
A patriarch sat stolidly fingering
The sandy strands of his beard.
From the church below rose the murmur of the litanies
And the stench of sweating unwashed bodies,
An oxcart rumbled past on the uneven cobbles,
The crows were cawing as they picked the bodies
Of the recent beheading — held in the spot
Where it is said they slew Stenka Razin . . .
And the patriarch supported
By the faith of the mothers heavy with babes,

By the peasant heavy with tax levies,
Dozed in the kreslo in the midst of the wide-eyed primitives
Of the Byzantines, sainted in scrolled basilica,
Which stared, surrounded by the decorations of the paling, early Slavonic . . .
The sky was a verdigrised weather-beaten bowl of copper,
The cupolas loud with gold were a calvalcade of festive paythans,
The crows sifted down, jade shards from a torn cornucopia,
And against the piked zigzag walls, defiant in the teeth of the grinning Tartars,
Like a verdant draft from a heavily mossed woodland,
Wafted in the traditions from the distant Volga;
The patriarch slept, while from the neighboring church
Thru the silken air a kolokol
Kept showering the gold coin of its sound:
Kopecks for the beggarmen; roubles for the gentlemen;
A blessing for them who have wed;
A prayer for those who are dead —
The litanies came chanted and chanted
By congregations humming

Like swarms of noonday bees
Ranted, repeated, and chanted;
In the names of the bones of the saints,
For the sakes of the crimes of the czars,
For the love of the wide-eyed, song people,
For the sakes of them, for the names of them,
For the loves of them, sang the worshipers,
Slept the patriarch, rang the kolokols,
While the sun gave it serenity,
As to a picture, as to a mosaic
Which days had collected, faith hath gyved,
Blood had sealed — to last for ever and ever —
Unto eternities — kyrie eleison —
Amen . . .
And to the patriarch, thru the forests
Dreams had drawn out of the heart of desire,
Came a snowmaiden, jingling and jangling:
Alms for the beggarmen; kisses for the gentlemen,
As her troika sped nearer from the rim
Of the background of sleep.
Vixen hair, dawn-gray eyes, ash-berry lips,
Tunic trimmed with fur and spangles, boyar boots
to gold point tapered,

Heels studded with Ural rubies . . .
Drop stitch, cross stitch, chain stitch —
Think a little, dream a little, sigh a little —
And in this place, a bit of lace —
And then you wipe a tear . . .

II

Oarsmen on the Volga, lovers under birches,
Storks stalking the rooftops,
Snakes are shedding skin,
And out on the dim-blue meadows
A straggling gypsy camp.
The sun is creeping behind the poplars
Which screens the bend of the runnel
As thru that veil it mottles
The bronzed face of a young gypsy boy,
Colt's wide eyes, hair the mane of a pony
And between him and his naked hard limbs
All his treasures, possessions and domains:
A shirt, a belt, breeches and a guitar
And a blade of grass between his teeth.
But hear! The owls grow silent
Even the frogs seem muted —

Where the tsiganye are squatting,
Thru the firefly-sparkling hay-air
The guitars are beginning
Like tardy moving rivers,
Plaintively and slowly, large, andante
Like sun-veiling mists moving.
The youngsters watch the fire,
The deep guitars are wailing,
The gypsy mother is singing:
The days have vanished that never will return,
Never will return, like the waters of the runnel,
Which float by forever to the far, far away oceans,
Never will return, like birds which sink westward,
Flowers that will wither — were the days of pleasure . . .
Oh, the warm days and wild thymed nights
The days when I was a maiden —
Sings the dark old mother
To the dusk star-dusted plains . . .
Drop stitch, cross stitch, chain stitch —
Think a little, dream a little, sigh a little —
And in this place for peasant lace —
And then you wipe a tear . . .

III

Who has struck the cymbal with his fisted fingers?
Like breeze which stirs the sluggish tepid waters
Over the strings of music passed a wakening ripple,
The chieftain's voice is firm
The guitars fall in with him:
Like young prancing peonies,
Sons of Egypt, grieve not.
Tho we are ever driven
We are as the wind is, as the driven waters,
As the bird which is singing,
The colt free on the prairies,
Now let the guitars tell it
To every love-sick gypsy:
Heigh-ho, gypsies! Tell it
To the world and its barins.

CHORUS

(Star-flung song and freedom
Are desert daughter's dowry . . .)
Heigh-ho, gypsies! Tell it!
(Aiais . . . aiai . . . iaiai . . .
Aiaia . . . iaiai . . . iaiai . . .)

Song is my daughter's dowry
(Aiaia . . . iaiai . . . iaiai . . .)
Under a linden of the peasant's cottage
A gray-eyed mother croons to a swathed baby
Doll-like dozing in her arms,
From the stall comes the angelus
The rumbling of things fed, contented;
Peonies are drinking moisture
All disheveled, luring flies. . . .
Like one who swoons on a lake of lilacs
And struggles out of the drugging caress;
So stirs the baby, its small fists clenching,
For thru its mind's corridors as yet unechoed,
Like whispered forecasts of the cradle fairies
Drifts the refrain of the gypsy chorus:
(*Piano;* Aiai . . iaiai . . . iaia . . .
Pianissimo diminuendo; Aiaia . . iai . . . iai . . i . . . i) *
Hush, maliutka . . . it's just the gypsies . . .
Carousing out in the open,
Godless gypsies who steal babies,
Who tell fortunes, cast evil eyes,
Hush maliutka, think on dovenests.

* *See notes.*

Sleep my baby; dream of angels,
Of Saint Michael, of Saint Peter.
The poplars which the runnel guard
Move about to beat the time,
The moon is the pendulum in their branches . . .
With the dew the song is falling,
A train has whistled in dim distance . . .
Drop stitch, cross stitch, chain stitch —
Dream a little, think a little, sigh a little —
And in this place some peasant lace —
And then you wipe a tear . . .

IV

Now there is a silence measured by the crickets,
Night has flung a starred shawl about the pungent fire;
Marushka, whose eyes are pinesparks in darkness kindling,
Slip the snake-green kerchief from your impatient hair,
Show the ducat earrings, beads of shells and shekels,
Make a circle, gypsies, like frogs about a willow
Which the joy of passion
Stirs like a young colt twitching;
Hot as the breath of the prairies,
Strong as the wakening water,

Dark as the pool of the fairies
Is the love of the tsigan's daughter.
Frail as the blossoms blowing,
As light and carefree from fading,
Tender as sun's fruit glowing
Is the black-lashed tsigan maiden.
Fleet as snake darting for shadows —
The Barin of unbounded spaces
For footstool gave her the meadows
And for necklace a bounty of graces.
The barins they make gilded cages
For timid and fairfaced lasses.
She sings while the thunder rages
And pins stars into her tresses. . . .
She sings while the thunder rages
And with stardust silvers her tresses.
Thus the curly prince of roofless realms
Woos the black-eyed heiress of incessant wonder
While their bare retinue applauds and shouts in chorus:
Tramp upon your sorrow, dance away your youth,
Dance and dance whatever chance,
Tantsuy, Marushka, Tantsuy —
The tambourines answer: dance —

The guitars affirm: dance.
Marushka is dancing, the fire startles, gleams,
The gypsies' white teeth show at their grin,
Above the glow of the fire the guitars and tambourines
Vault the summer heavens — and the wide countryside
dreams. . . .
Drop stitch, cross stitch, chain stitch —
Think a little, dream a little, weep a little,
And in this place some peasant lace —
And then you wipe a tear . . .

V

Archangel's air has a bitter edge,
Kazan is silent and broods
For it holds fast to the heritage
Of Russia's heroic moods
And Baikal beyond the Urals lies,
Tiflis is at Araby's door,
The Krim is the dreamer's paradise,
To Chita you drop thru the floor.
Mountains and seas and rivers blend
Under her crazy-quilt sky,
Tho I may be at either end

I'll come to Moskva to die.
As the bear crawls to its long, long sleep
When life's winter will drive me home,
So shall I bring her my heart to keep,
To Matushka Moskva I'll come.
To Matushka Moskva, my tovarish,
To Matushka Moskva I'll come.

VI

A landscape with rift in the blue-black silk curtain
Where the darkening forest parts in a clearing
For the rutted, weed-tufted crosscountry highway:
Above it are pitched the tense telegraph wires
On poles awry, which ramble and stumble off to horizons
Like stragglers retreating.
Into the heart of the woods they are creeping
The poles with the road, carrying wires,
Wires which above the cones, above the birdsnests,
Swish out disasters, hurdle old secrets,
Under the sunset, sparkling forth love-words and prayers
Lessening . . . lost. . . .
Under the sunset which flies a banner of scarlet
To which the black pine trees are a somnolent staff.

Scarlet on scarlet like red blood congealing,
And thru all this carmine like gold newly beaten,
The half-ring of the sickle of the sun glows setting.
  Within the fields, like the cap of a traveler
Carelessly thrown shows the roof of a hut.
The road is the center, around it the full summer is gathered.
The smell of the stubble and the waiting straw ripening,
Dust with the breath of dew wetted,
The forest too weary of the heat to whisper,
The skies too pensive to veil —
For presently the August moon comes crawling,
A puckered big orange
Some child dropped, rolling
On to a spread of dark-blue stretched plush.
  Like strokes of hammer from a smithy
Come from within the heart of forest
Steps of thousand feet, a-marching,
Clearer, nearer they are coming,
Clearer, nearer the sound is carried
Till just in the rift of forest
The very first line soon appears.
With even beat of thousand feet

Come the swinging men in khaki,
Down the dusty road they hammer,
And above gleams the sky-in-fading,
And the road at their feet is trembling...
Four abreast the Slavs come singing,
The Crusaders of Kinder Dawn,
Warriors of Plows and Sickles,
Not a rifle, not a saber,
No coat-of-arms on their banner,
Just heart's blood to give them courage.
Not a warcry of the ages,
Just the universal song of dole...
Ragged khaki, rugged faces
These the heirs of world's treasures,
These sons of Zemljaks from four corners,
From the Volga and the Dvina,
From the Azov, Don and Lena,
These shall inherit the earth...
Down the road the song is dying,
The drumming of the feet grows soft,
The sun fades slowly in the treetops,
The moon is on with all her make-up,
Down the road the men are singing

The songs of sorrow.
Down the road the men are singing . . .
The songs of sorrow . . . . .
Down the road . . . . . .
. . . . . down the road . . . . . .
. . . . . down . . . . . the road . . . . . .
. . . . . the road
Drop stitch, cross stitch, chain stitch —
Think a little, dream a little, sigh a little —
And in this place some peasant lace —
And then you wipe a tear.

VI

As one who with clasped, feverish fingers
Lifts a chalice of precious liquid
To the lips of a marble goddess,
So to you, as a devout pilgrim
Do I come my heart-bowl bearing
Of my blood, my gall and songs.
All my skeins lie limp and tangled,
But still I'd weave like a patient peasant
Prayers, wishes, hopes of hopeless
Schemes and dreams the fates have mangled.

Madonna of the Endless Snows!
  But perhaps, at night, dorogaia,
When enshrined like gold-white deity,
Sainted Russia of my penance,
You lie sleepless in your izba, dreaming,
And raise your eyes to your ikons,
My towel shall speak like faint soft folktales.
Then — on all my stitching and my weaving
All my hoping, praying, singing,
Pass your white hand as in blessing —
And drop the unction of your tear....

III

OCCASIONAL

Sundown in America

INTO THE torn sunset of Wyoming's desert past an Indian
chief's grave
Rides a consumptive cowboy whistling a jazz composed by
a Galician Jew in Brooklyn;
In a galvanized shack in the olive grove a rouge-lipped
Italian girl
Is noisily pulling the last sheet out of her typewriter;
Two Negroes are walking from the docks in Baltimore
Talking about a meeting of the Knights of Pythias;
On a farm in Kansas a small towheaded boy baptized
Johann
Is peering from the threshold toward the telegraph poles
for his daddy's Ford car;
The calling of newsboys — the jangle and bellowing of the
cows —
The toot of endless horns — the rasping of crickets —

The rush hour on the subways and trolleys — the piping of the sunweary birds —
The rise of the evening star above a forest on Lake Superior,
Little merchants pompously switching on electric display lights,
The clatter of dishes — the stamping of fly-ridden horses while unharnessed;
Young girls, chattering hurriedly, powder their faces in dressing rooms of department stores;
On the darkened heights of Pike's Peak the mountain flowers huddle to sleep before the cold;
On a straggling fishing boat off Nantucket
A man is looking at the comics of last Sunday's Boston newspaper;
On the outskirts of Mt. Rainier a man lying in an underbrush,
Is breaking the law aiming his gun at a solitary antler;
On a porch of a boarding house of Santa Barbara a bobbed-haired, middle-aged novelist
Is reading a love letter from a college boy and smoking a cigarette;
A toy train full of Hungarian miners is puffing into a filthy company-owned town;

In a store of Omaha a hesitating Bohemian farmer is
examining a phonograph;
On a lonely sandbar of the Atlantic a flock of snipe is
dashing through the shallows —
It is sundown in America.

"... and Recorded in the Office of the Registrar of Deeds...."

CONSIDER — CONFUSION —
Consider — a clerk at fractions:
Days are dates, from nine to six,
Life is all a bag of tricks; carry nine, — put down six:
Consider — a germ hatching in the victuals of a worm,
A sapling planted for a centenary oak,
Wandering moonlight in the ruins of a castle,
A streetlight alone in rain on a pitch-black wharf,
A dustgray nestling rolling on a broken wing —
Manifold, manifold profusion
In self-confounded, entangled confusion —
Consider!
In the Beginning was the Word, but herein lies the consummation —
The Deed!
Here are reams and tomes, the blood and sweat of ages;

Pelf, theft, greed, senseless, verbal bluff,
Here's the altar punctilious, the sanctuary for specks,
Archives for each bounty, in borough and the county:
This is the Office of the Registrar
Ancient, impeccable, where with exactness impregnable
Are deeds of feoffs, old grants and entails.
See the little lawschool graduate,
How he fumbles with the stuff:
If a white hare nibbled young clover unentailed —
Is it — trover — ?
Consider!
And a walrus on a melting icefloe yawns,
A mole is blind to *clausum fregit*,
A cat commits larceny in first degree —
But each widow's dot, each parcel and lot,
By bound and by mete, by inches and feet,
If encumbered or free — is marked accurately
In the office of the Registrar,
The trusted and just Registrar.
Consider the chemical composition of protoplasm,
Electron immortality, aristocracy of eon,
Theology of matter — even frivolity of a sunspot!

On the doorstep of a cricket-farm a blond, blue-eyed
daughter,
Thru the sieve of leafy branches stares at a full moon....
Consider!

The Valley of Ur

HERE WHERE the sun's heat parches,
Where a dead ocean's sinuous sands
Mock trails of triumfant arches,
Where man's hunger covets no lands,

Where never a song is falling,
Nor beast ever bleats, but the lone
Misguided jackal comes calling
For a crust of time-crumbled bone.

The plentiful grit knows no shallows
Nor graveyards yield tale-telling stones,
Where truculent trunks of the gallows
Mingle with dust of the thrones,

Where brothels are one with the altars,
And loves have been leveled with hates —

Here man's vaunted history falters
Barren of records and dates.

Nor star's, nor dawn's, nor the noon's rays
Break on a shadow or shade,
But the moon which towers and surveys
Heralds how history is made:

The Deed which was in The Beginning —
Tho some claim The Word was spoken,
Which bore all strife and all sinning
For conquest of clay or a token.

Here lie all counts in summation —
Where within hollow immense,
Hope is at tide with negation,
Truth with pretense.

Here pause the pilgrims for power,
The garnerers who did not reap,
And thrift rues no flight of the hour
Lost in a sleep.

No rebels will evoke equation,
Creeds crave no deeds of defense,
Their mercies are merged with damnation
And malice prepense.

Where each faith and each error blends
No sect can ever be woken —
Sunk are its foes and its friends
Into sands unbroken.

You wranglers for credulous winning,
Seekers for motives and trends:
That to man, for his sorrow and sinning,
Fate yield portents!

The sky here offers a token —
Where a dead moon hangs glaring and grinning
Ashed light on silence intense:
The Word which was solemnly spoken,
The Deed which was in The Beginning —
Meet their ends.

A Modern Litany

POINTLESS STREETS run with emphasis — and cease;
And raindrops glisten on needles of the pines;
And unseen moonlight shimmers on traceless seas;
And men fly sunward, or burrow in lightless mines;
And loosened winds go scattering frail seeds;
And frosts with sleet come killing untold lives;
And men make words about desires and needs;
And panther-girls stoop into tawdry wives.
Vain are all elysia from Asgard to Valhalla —
Ora et labora — Ora et labora!

Night by night the stars patroling yawn,
While under them men pace their hand-made stone;
While restless souls toss waiting for the dawn
Resentful that another day is done.
And morning comes again with clouds or veneered
light,

To change the calendar, promising episodes,
Mounts into noon, and drags into the night
While life is spilling down the blocks and roads.
False are all prophets: Joshua or Deborah —
Ora et labora — Ora et labora!

Funneled ships dot horizons and then fade,
And screeching trains converge, and halt, and fly
Scattering bodies. The self same scenes are played
In varying keys beneath a varying sky.
Evil the gifts spilt from Pandora's box
Of fear and strife, and aim which doubts its ends
And pleasure rhythmic by derisive clocks,
And the bane of loves, the plague of foes and friends.
Sham is all sorcery: voodoo or kabala —
Ora et labora — Ora et labora!

Pointless streets start with emphasis — and droop,
Weighed with the tons of motors, guns and hearses;
And eager children watch them from the stoop;
And sanguine fools declaim in futile verses;
And wise men sift the certainty from error;
And doctors tinker with the human race.

Life teems, absorbed in self, while shying from the terror
Of a lifeless world adrift in endless space.

(*Pianissimo*)
All things shall perish as Sodom and Gomorrah —
Ora et labora — Ora et labora!

Aria Parlante

THERE WAS a night, while the Adriatic underfoot
Measured time on its pebbled penury,
Where alone from the bowlder whereon I stood,
I surveyed the magic of the blanching perjury
Which the limped light gave that crystal vision.
The setting of it mocked me with derision.

For all about me throngs seemed to be seated,
And I seemed another echo on that wave-washed stone
Of them, who departing, had bequeathed
To me the splash of that endless monotone
Of time and water, and the knowledge that my doom
Was that of a small light — in a vast unopened tomb.

These United States in This Here Presidentiad

TO WALT WHITMAN

(May 31, 1819)

WHITMAN — I think of you as of America marching —
I think of you when the negro band jazzes di Lammermoor
When the Vermont President preaches molasses morality
To a merchant nation, engrossed in bourse and traffic.
I think of you when the Marines crusade forth flag-planting,
Even on Fourth of July, and on the Feast-day of the Feed of the Starved Puritans,
When speeches fast in the radio-yard bloom,
I think of you.
Your Libertad panoplied goes on marching, old Walt,
Her wares now rumble where once the Cæsars bled,
Even the far tiger in his lonely desert lair

Trembles at the blast of the Yankee Klaxton horn.
From Paumonok, Potomac, and leagues away from the prairies,
The erst pioneers are marching, on Osakas highways,
They've stormed the stark, bleak, viking fjord-lands,
The giliad balm of their pure transient oil
Falls from the exhaust over Himalayan peaks,
And before the threshold of the Palace of the Doges
The saxophones bray a blues writ by a Jew-Yank in Brooklyn.
Dim and Distant's the Passage to India,
Columbiad which sliced the hemisphere asunder
Now schemes to negotiate a Lane to the Moon.
In this Presidentiad, this planet's conquerors' children
Are dreamers, seekers for the morganas and rainbows,
Their shirtsleeve souls exude the perfume of the sweat,
While at rainbow's ends they find the pots of gold.
WALT — you, who were their singer and prophet,
They still exclude, condemn.
But they're marching, marching round toward you —
And ere many a Presidentiad, your beard and your bonnet
Will, next to the screaming eagle, be upon the altar
Of their plenty-horn coins.

IV

--- OF LIGHTER THINGS ---

On Hearing Professor Theremin Play on Air

I

ALEXANDER OF MACEDON

ALEXANDER OF MACEDON pondered o'er the things he'd done,
All he slaughtered, as he sprinted from land to land,
And all the stuff that would be printed, when he'd end.
Glum he was, as he'd touch the ball of gold and the mace
Empirical, it was not much, the world was old and a little place.
He grew cynical, then taciturn, and then he cried:
"I have no other town to burn — women — I've tried
The mobile-hipped, the frigid, the shining and the filmy-eyed,
From Indus to the Niemen. I know the trick of every wench

Each belly-muscle. I am sick of their sob and stench,
Just as of warfare's dirt and bustle. Dig me a trench
To measure, then heave a mold above my bones
Where they will rot, and at leisure mold to rigid stones."
Said Great Alexander of Macedon
Who had everything seen and done.

II

THRIFT, THRIFT, HORATIO

Poor Richard's Almanac Dramatized:
I sent a kite with a five cent string
And what Prometheus failed to fetch
For demigods, I vulgarized.
Out of the clouds my kite did bring:
It's two cents a kilowatt — what a catch!
Then I founded the Yankee creed:
Poverty's a shameful crime,
Gold is good — gold is power.
Weaklings call thrift — the greed.
Save the nickel, hug the dime,
It will build the Woolworth Tower.

III

THE TELESCOPE MAN AT BRYANT PARK

This is the city's brake and bracken, here the receding stones
Form a cadenza — framed by the parallel bars.
Here the pulmonary nitrogen mounts not hymnally to winking mazdas,
But like zephyr spirals, toward Sirius and other stars
Over the fallen leaves of the daily tabloids. . . .
And here among those who pass and press
Came one Solomon Pericles.
Solomon Pericles lived in the Bronx,
Read Buckle and Einstein, The Times and The News,
Rode in the subways with close-herded Jews
Dreaming of Arcady.
On the brink of a canyon he trafficked in bonds,
Working for firms, receiving pay,
Following routine day after day.
In Scotch and Baccardi
He worked off the surplus: — love is a sin!
Silklegged girls and bootlegged gin —
Angels in Bastardy.
Solomon Pericles out for a lark
Was stopped by a sentinel near Bryant Park:

"Nickel, Mister, only a nickel, have a peep at Sirius."
"Go, Sadie, have a look, it looks just like a big solitaire."
Better than whores, who pass in the night,
The Grand Old Universe here is on sight,
With rings on her fingers — and with flawless flare
Flaunts, for a nickel, her solitaire.
"Say, it looks something like the Mogen David."
The heavens are a Jew Tabernacle with Sirius on the façade.
Solomon Pericles shook a wise head —
And followed a pair of silk legs instead —
What good is Sirius to Solomon? —
It's not worth a nickel.

IV

ENGINEERING SOCIETY BUILDING
AT THIRTY-NINTH STREET

A snowflake fell upon my hat of felt,
There it felt discomfited, sad and dispirited — and did
melt . . .
So my too-awareness attempts the jocular
Having weak guts for the oracular:
A winter evening, the air has a smell of onion ripe
From the exhaust pipe of endless taxicabs churning.

Your eyes are burning — because
Each mazda-bulb has a rainbow corona with a golden lance.
Manhattan's draped in sparkling ether
Web-woven with radioed sighs of dead forgotten musicians.
Spend and invest, son of man,
Let's to the necromancers.
Here's a fellow from the wilds of Moscow on view:
He shall re-prove the Bible, bring vigor to your faith!
Here's a magician who demonstrates
That Moses was no liar, that Elijah
Was merely a tipsy medicine man,
Here's something that would tickle Alexander,
Julius Cæsar, Jack Cade, Torquemada and Benjamin Franklin.
Mankind is jaded — for a pittance — a bill
The kick of your life — *a positive thrill!!*

V

THE AIR MEWS LIKE MESSALINA

Stretch out your fingers, look, these once were talons
And shut tight on space, squeeze a handful of air —
And there is the chrysalis of future!
Would you spin fairy yarns?

What's Alladin's lamp, enchanted circle, or magic casements?
Apollo's steed, or Merlin's trickery?
Can they send thunderous light around the world?
Would a peasant plowing spuds in Lithuania,
He who hears the droning of Moscow mail
And has nodded his head at swarms of winged motors,
Raise his eyes to see Icarus swimming on a Golden Fleece?
Have you not seen a necromancer in tuck,
With polished nails, draw music from the air? —
Tho Moses struck rock to make water flow?
What were the deadly visitations of Egypt,
To capsuled breath? What was Medusa's stare
To piercing rays, which could Jericho's walls
Kindle and blaze like paper palace toy?
Have you not seen the lithe, unstained limbs
Of a giant motor sway within a temple,
Yielding forth force, a multifrugal Ceres,
Humble, unstinting, and unrevengeful?
What are the other triumphs, my cousin to the frog?
What chimeras, giants, demons, goblins, fairies,
Plan you to spill, like goblins, out of the dynamo static
Hid in the dark periphery of your skull?

But, what is that ache, which woke you —
When in the oozing mire you slept
And mimicked the inanimate stone?
Oh, cosmic wonder-child,
Which by the bootstraps of a little soul,
Crouching in the dung, catapulted
Until you flew to the threshold of the sun!
Shall the lake of a sky, candled by the stars,
Alone be the mirror approving
With freezing silence?
Where is the applause of your peers?
Or are these stars, with their masks of rigid, silver death,
Watching, with boredom, a repetitious plot?
Spit on your sphinx — seek — this is the riddle:
Clutch a handful of air — you grasp immortality.

September

BEING A SORT OF HARLEQUINADE TO BE READ TOGETHER WITH SYNCRETISM

OH, GENTLE Reader! — So in olden times
Have bards addressed you when they curried favor,
Craving indulgence for their broken rhymes
Lacking in wit and in poetic flavor —
Those days are dead and done, and what now worse is
'Tis only poets read each other's verses.

In these dim days — those raucous days of jazz
Of syncopation, skips and missing beats —
We have no lutes, but saxophones and brass,
No vine-leaved bards now serenade in streets
And should they, warbling rondel, ode or sapphic,
They'd get arrested for obstructing traffic.

And rightly too — since proper troubadouring
Is indoor sport, prologueing propagation.

As such it only thrives as art enduring
And should be used in proper situation.
A quatrain, sandwich, wench and bootleg ration
Was Omar's style — and it is still the fashion.

Nor Gentle Reader, is it my advice
That you present my verses to a lady,
Being made of spice and everything that's nice,
Since, look, my substance is a trifle shady.
My sallies, squibs, my parodies and jibes
May shock nice ladies, clergymen, or scribes,

I hate a jail, a barrack and a school,
All folks who limit, preach, forbid or bind
With pedantry of precedent and rule,
The wanton spirit of one's heart or mind;
I am for freedom in women, love and drink
In beasts and bards — in short — in everythink.

Yet, Gentle Reader, I'm a serious bard,
Which you may gather, reading page by page,
Wherein my muse does labor rather hard
To prove me less the singer and more the sage,

More of the kernel, less the bloom in budding.
My verses? — Well, the proof is in the pudding.

. . . . .

September is the month to change your mood,
For protoplasm shrinks in tropic clime,
Upon a touch of fall the human brood
Will recollect the cooling ooze and slime
In which the primal mole did lave and bask
And found the strength for evolution's task.

So that September, with its muck and rain,
Brings vigor with its raw and chilly touch
And man grows active, thru his brawn and brain
After the summer while he had dallied much —
Books and bills and flunked examinations,
Rally of Congress and the League of Nations.

September comes with grouse and scuttling hare,
With apples ripe, with gourds, with hay and stubble,
With wheeling birds and sharp crystalline air
In which at night the stars seem almost double.
It comes with a décor of Northern gloom —
Yet Nature, too, must have her second bloom.

She decks with scarlet rouge and silver dresses
And makes suggestive gesture as of May
And, otherwise, poetically, digresses —
Just as I do from the established way,
So that my lines will seem idiotic, or ironic,
In form quite Eliot-ic or Byronic.

Well, I've been long at trying for a form,
That's somewhat meet for motor installation,
Unmindful of the likely teapot storm
Among the folks of belles-lettres reputation,
And if I've worked in unfiled, rusty keys,
It was my echo that I've tried to please.

For our age is the age of great transition,
I'm told, but what were all the other ages?
The flux must show in poet's composition;
Our muses do not trot in measured stages —
We, in the States, have even airplane hearses —
And a million poets writing Wordsworth verses.

Better to write bad poetry than bad checks —
Altho the punishment should perhaps be equal,

Especially of those verbal architects
Who promise much in the forthcoming sequel,
Like Mr. Eliot who did blast our hope
By turning back to Addison and Pope.

His flagrant case is one past all forgiving.
His zigzag soul, like the skyline of New York,
He deserted. Bards forced to make a living
Will sometimes take on profitable work.
However, he grew classic, supra-critical,
Became the chassid, neo-Jesuitical.

De Gustibus, meaning it's all in taste
And valuation of our youthful prize.
The Dial, in fact, went into Land of Waste
And ultra free verse has had its demise.
Its bards are writing ads or selling silk,
Save Mr. Pound of Paris, and that ilk.

My canto with September had inception.
A month of tallies, harvest and fruition
A sort of climax to summer's hot conception,
It's then that parents furnish school tuition,

Their hopefuls meeting their mates and profs
and proctors —
And brides of June consult their family doctors.

The phallic finger writes and having writ —
So runs the law of predetermination
Founded by Newton who hit, as he was hit
By fouling apple, on laws of gravitation.
Then Einstein came — and he upset it all
Proving, tho Newton hit, the apple didn't fall.

The true descent symbolic of that apple
Has rocked the cosmos — but in complex terms
Far too abstruse for untaught minds to grapple,
I, therefore, leave such bitter fruit to worms,
Regarding it with justified suspicion
Because of its deterministic mission.

In Eden first, then Troy, later with Newton
A long career both dire and fatalistic —
I say, the apple seems to be a fruit on
Which mankind's view may well be pessimistic.
Its guile, however, is such, that even I
Seldom resist a well-baked apple pie;

Baked in the setting of New England's farm
To crackling fire with uncut russet cider,
Beside a russet daughter, whose quaint charm
Is flushed by fear her waking dad will chide her,
For having left her chores in wild disorder
While farming unpaid joys to city boarder.

Regarding Einstein here my vagrant Muse
Rejecting constraint, holds this a place
To animadvert upon my fellow-Jews;
Tho I have argued that it's but ill grace
Either to mark their fault, or vaunt their virtue,
For if you're a Jew, either is bound to hurt you.

For when they opened the ghetto and the college
The Jews rushed out and in; a situation
Which was bound to affect all knowledge
As well as ladies of each Christian nation,
For the disregard of true Mosaic strictures
Brought Charlie Chaplin — and other mixtures.

The fault lies with our democratic era
Which tends to bring all things to common level,

So that the whilom rogue appears a hero,
The erstwhile hero shows up quite the devil,
While true-blue blood thins out to texture bluish
And the presumption is, that all are slightly Jewish.

I hold that prejudice, discrimination,
With a few pogroms, at proper time and place,
Are the only means against the extermination
And disappearance of old Abraham's race.
Good Jews should encourage anti-racial fury,
Only by killing Jews, can you conserve the Jewry.

My name's Hachsanus; I live in a city
Within whose streets the polyglots were able
To eclipse that naïve, biblical, old ditty
Of wonders, of the mighty tower of Babel;
Proving the old Jews talkative and wrong
Not using more of derricks — and less of tongue.

While walking on the Avenue after seven —
The time was midweek and the month September,
I thought on many things on earth and heaven,
And all religions that I could remember —

To merge it all in one synthetic creed
More suited to our present spark and speed.

For man, withal, is a most credulous creature
Longs to be of some party, or some faction;
As each can boast of some competing feature —
Saint Vladimir * once held a public auction
At which he offered the whole unwashed nation
To some church which would save it from damnation.

I like faith sold thus in a wholesale fashion,
The highest bidder impartially should win!
Salvation ladled in the retail ration

* *Saint Vladimir, the first Christian ruler of all Russia, when he was about to discard the pagan beliefs of his subjects, organized a sort of a competition of the then existing* (987 A.D.) *Christian creeds as well as the Jewish and the Mohammedan.*

The Byzantine Church treated his ambassadors to a grand show in Constantinople outdoing, by far, any offering by the other rivals. The apparent pomp and prosperity impressed this half-savage with the puissant divinity of this Church and he decreed for the faith of the Greek Orthodox.

P.S. In those days, it is to be noted, the Jews had not yet entered the theatrical profession in considerable numbers, and no production, comparable to Dr. Reinhardt's "Miracle," could be organized by them.

Eats up more overhead than even sin.
Nobly did Vladimir with Holy Konstantin
Giving the Slavs their bliss and their Rasputin.

Creeds have ever been dear to men of writing,
Only a poet could build old Noah's Ark
And bring it thru a voyage so exciting —
All of which, however, is beside the mark . . .
I and September have a common bond —
Its flower — the chrysanthemum blond.

'Tis in September folks decamphor gowns,
Landlords refresh their leases, lawyers cases,
Summer resorts are closed, the flight to towns
Once more assembles a motley of odd faces —
The churches draw this variegated vermin,
For there the preachers spout the September sermon.

And since I've donned the pontifex's hood
In competition, I too, must get ready —
Seeing that there has been an interlude
In revivals since Mary Baker Eddy —
She was a soul devout,— but most unkind
To relegate her husbands as *matter under mind.*

She knew her yokels better than Freud or Coué
And investments too — and ever since her heirs
Have run the plants *ad majoram Gloriam Dei*
In *Spirito Sano*, the Corpus, tho, is theirs.
They burn no heretics — but sans curse or unction,
Make science legal thru a court injunction.

September, too, is the ideal month to reason,
The month of premières and of changing passions,
And creeds like clothes, must suit the mood and season,
The old ones being stored with last year's fashions.
We keep the trifles; candles, beads and hollies,
From the preceding years' religious follies.

Like Mr. Ziegfeld, I want a new review,
Taking the best of all the old productions,
Tho knowing that there's really nothing new
Beneath the sun — now without more introductions
I realize this to be the proper time
To change to different meter, thought and rhyme.

But before I detour from this present road
On the coalescence of dissent and schism,

Permit the mention of this anecdote
As prologue to my Modern Catechism.
I dedicate it to my youthful son
And not my daughter — I not having one. . . .

Had I a daughter fair, like vixen fay,
With skin like dawn and eye like glowing ember,
I would not name her April, June or May
But have her baptized as and for September,
To me the scheme seems pertinent and apt
Save when she'd sign herself, for short, as — Sept.

Had I a daughter fair, like vixen fay,
Our family-life would truly prove tempestuous,
For I would do it in true Freudian way,
And sure become suppressedly incestuous;
I'd run to doctors with my dark confession
Giving succor to a sucker-profession.

Men loved their mothers ere Œdipus and since,
Without especial praise, especial blame,
But when Freud undecked a continent of sins
Our days and nights grew drab and dark with shame;

On sleeping, rising, our complexes clash —
Until we drop our Œdipus and cash.

In belles lettres, too, I must cast no aspersion
On advanced critics who maintain that Proust
In lavish style dissected all perversion:
Tho why and wherefore in that sea he cruised,
Unless to prove with elegance and learning,
That the world keeps its Homo fires burning.

I, for myself, frown at all such disclosures,
It's not good breeding — I was early taught
To keep all skeletons within enclosures
And the commandment of never being caught —
And I regard it unesthetic manners
To use your "undies" as your psychic banners.

When the enterprising psycho scans your annals —
To dig imagos that you can't remember
And reach your amours through sub-navel channels —
But I've diverted from the month September,
And like most priests upon redemption's search,
Talked sex to converts on the way to church.

I might have given my reader the impression
Of trying to be naughty, or slightly coarse,
Like a certain poet, who sings the illstarred passion
Of a buxom lady for a stalwart horse —
My modern women would eschew such turgid fare:
They'd choose a motor, or use frigidaire.

I wish I were as polished as Miss Millay,
As T. S. erudite or had Huxley's verve,
But since nor skill, nor grace, nor technique, I display,
I try to hide it in my racial nerve,
My forbears traveled with Greeks, and Medes and Perses,
And helped themselves to women, wines and verses.

It was all wrong — I cannot well deny it
And legally deserved true condemnation,
Plagiarism is theft, and I decry it—
As bard I see it as the worst abomination —
If I help myself — it's from a demised poet,
Or one half-dead, or too obtuse to know it.

Novelty is hard in poetic composition —
Few ever succeed, tho many try,

Even those poets revolting in "transition"
Rebel in a pattern — and while they yell and cry
Like flocks of eaglets thru their Paris pages,
They are but owls — in futuristic cages.

The Paris academia of exiled writing
Seems too much soaked in alcohol and style,
But it's a vantage point for safe indicting
The *mores* and bores of Manhattan Isle —
And there, too, Joyce unfrocked and photographic
Sub-rosa sells to clients pornographic.

His latest work with Hebrew spiced and Gaelic,
Like Dublin stew served at a Yiddish shindy,
The Jabberwock to a Daedalus the phallic —
And if at times it skittish grew or windy
'Twas planned to prove the up-to-minute Muse,
In cross-word puzzles, warbles to confuse.

I hold the Irish are a singing nation,
Strong in their cups, stout fighters, braggarts, wits —
But that their rooted plain imagination
Too solid is for Latin Quarter fits —

Unfit for wares of Moselle, Seine or Rhine
And bocks of lager, even a Gertrude Stein.

The Fiftieth Stanza: It was my intention
To stop this tirade when I reached this number,
But like some judges, I decline suspension,
They who persist in a sustainèd slumber
While hearing causes, with gray inclined heads —
Who'd rather sleep on benches than in beds.

But parting is so difficult a matter
And my paper offers more of empty space —
But for sake of sequence, I know I had better
All deviation heretofore retrace,
And ask my reader kindly to remember,
That this was written in, and of September.

Also because, without being a vandal,
I planned in one to fuse all creed and schism,
As well as, without picking literary scandal,
To indulge in bits of friendly criticism,
Just in the form of mild extravaganza —
This is, however, my fifty-second stanza.

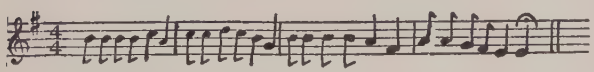
It's time for lunch, for dinner, or for bed,
For breakfast, supper, cocktail, or for tea,
And tho there's odd things I have left unsaid —
This stanza's number being fifty-three —
It's time for parting — however Gentle Reader
Never say die! *Ich komme 'mal schon wieder....*

NOTES

The Meaning of Russian Terms Used in PATTERN FOR A RUSSIAN TOWEL:

1 – Barin ..... – Lord, also gentleman
2 – Chram ..... – Cathedral
3 – devochka dorogaia .. – maiden dear
4 – dorogaia ..... – dear
5 – ikon ..... – holy image
6 – izba ..... – a room
7 – kolokol ..... – a churchbell
8 – kreslo ..... – a chair, also arm or throne chair
9 – maliutka ..... – endearing term for an infant
10 – matushka ..... – little mother
11 – Stenka Razin ..... – Stephen Timofeevich Razin, a peasant rebel leader executed in Moscow, in 1671. In Russian folk songs he occupies a position similar to the English Robin Hood
12 – tovarish ..... – comrade
13 – zemljak ..... – a peasant, husbandsman, a countryman

The Gypsy Refrain in PATTERN FOR A RUSSIAN TOWEL:



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